

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OES-07 ERDA-05 ACDA-07 IO-13 EB-07
NRC-05 FEAE-00 TRSE-00 /112 W
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R 231613Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4652
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PARIS 18528

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: FR IN PK AF
SUBJ: FRENCH VIEWS ON INDIA, PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

REF: NEW DELHI 8837

SUMMARY: DURING PERIODIC TOUR D'HORIZON, QUAI OFFICER
HANDLING SOUTH ASIA DISCUSSED FRENCH VIEWS OF THE
RAPIDLY CHANGING SITUATION IN SOUTH ASIA. IN GENERAL,
THE FRENCH SOURCE, WHO IS AMONG THE KEY EXPERTS WORKING
ON THE AREA, THOUGHT SOUTH ASIA FACED FAR MORE
UNPREDICTABLE FUTURE THAN ANYONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT
A FEW MONTHS AGO. GIVEN THE AGE OF THE LEADERS OF
INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN, THE CURRENT GOVERNMENTS SHOULD
BE CONSIDERED INTERIM GOVERNMENTS, WHICH GAVE NO
INDICATIONS AT THIS TIME OF THE CHARACTER OF SUCCESSOR
GOVERNMENTS. ALTHOUGH BHUTTO MIGHT BE ABLE TO REAFFIRM
CONTROL OF PAKISTAN, HE WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO DO SO
WITH THE SAME AUTHORITARIANISM WHICH HE HAD BEFORE.
WE SHOULD EXPECT SOME SURPRISES IN THE YEARS AHEAD.
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END SUMMARY.

1. INDIA.

A. DESAI VISIT TO FRANCE.

QUAI SOURCE SAID THAT THE MOST INTERESTING

CONVERSATION, IF NOT THE MOST PRACTICAL, HAD PROBABLY BEEN THAT BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER DESAI AND PRESIDENT GISCARD. THE FRENCH PRESIDENT HAD DECLARED AFTER THE CONVERSATIONS THAT THEY HAD DISCUSSED "POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE MORALITY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS." THE QUAI DID NOT YET HAVE A DETAILED READOUT OF THIS CONVERSATION, BUT THOUGHT THAT IT PROBABLY HAD BEEN AN IMPORTANT ONE IN THAT IT HAD GIVEN PRESIDENT GISCARD AN INSIGHT INTO THE THINKING OF DESAI AND OF THE POSSIBLE FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH OF HIS GOVERNMENT. THE FRENCH HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE INTELLECTUAL AND EVEN PHYSICAL VIGOR OF DESAI AND THOUGHT THAT HE DID NOT SHOW HIS AGE. NONTHELESS GIVEN DESAI'S AGE, HE COULD ONLY BE THE HEAD OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT, AND HIS PERSONAL IMPACT WAS OF UNPREDICTABLE DURATION. GISCARD WAS APPARENTLY FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY DESAI'S GRASP OF MANY WORLD PROBLEMS, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE HAS NOT YET HAD TIME TO STUDY SOME FILES ON PROBLEMS WHICH WILL BE OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE TO INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PAKISTANI-FRENCH NUCLEAR CONNECTION AND INDIAN NUCLEAR POLICY. ON SUCH SUBJECTS, DESAI HAD RESPONDED WITH SEMI-INFORMED GENERALITIES.

IN THE TALKS WITH PRIME MINISTER BARRE, DESAI STRONGLY PUSHED FOR AN INCREASED FRENCH CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ROLE IN INDIA AND AN AUGMENTATION OF CONFIDENTIAL

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ECONOMIC AID. NOTHING CONCRETE WAS AGREED UPON, BUT THE FRENCH WERE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY DESAI'S OPEN AND PRAGMATIC APPROACH.

QUAI OFFICER HAD NOT YET SEEN SAMACHAR REPORT FROM PARIS (REFTEL) CONCERNING INDIA'S RAISING WITH THE GOF THEIR CONCERN ABOUT THE PAKISTANI RE-PROCESSING PLANT. HE WAS SURE THAT THIS MATTER HAD NOT BEEN RAISED IN THE FORMAL CONVERSATIONS WITH BARRE -- AND THERE WAS NO TETE-A-TETE -- BUT IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT THE SUBJECT COULD HAVE BEEN RAISED WITH GISCARD. OUR SOURCE THOUGHT THAT THE FRENCH LEADER WOULD CERTAINLY LISTEN SYMPATHETICALLY TO DESAI'S OPINIONS ON THIS SUBJECT, BUT HE DOUBTED IT WOULD VERY MUCH INFLUENCE FRENCH DECISIONS.

B. INDIAN INTERNAL SCENE.

THE FRENCH CONSIDER THE DESAI GOVERNMENT TO BE VERY MUCH AN INTERIM POLITICAL PHENOMENON. THEY CONSIDER, ON THE OTHER HAND, THAT THE CONGRESS PARTY ALSO HAS AN UNPREDICTABLE FUTURE. MME. GANDHI IS ATTEMPTING TO PULL THE STRINGS FROM BEHIND THE SCENES,

BUT HER CHANCES OF SUCCESS ARE PROBLEMATIC. SHE REMAINS A FORMIDABLE FIGURE NONETHELESS. BETWEEN THE ASCENDENCY OF THE JANATA GROUP AND THE COMMUNIST ADVANCES IN WEST BENGAL AND KERALA, THE CONGRESS PARTY HAD STRONG COMPLAINTS TO MAKE AGAINST ITS ERSTWHILE LEADER. ALSO, OLD RIVALRIES AND NEW ASPIRATIONS WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE PARTY TO MAINTAIN UNITY, REFORM ITSELF AND MAKE AN EFFECTIVE ATTEMPT TO BE A SOLID "OPPOSITION" PARTY.

THE FRENCH HAVE CONCLUDED THAT GIVEN THE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PARIS 18528

OBVIOUSLY TEMPORARY NATURE OF DESAI'S RULE, THE PROVISIONAL NATURE OF THE JANATA COALITION AND THE INCREASING FRAGMENTATION OF OTHER POLITICAL FORCES IN INDIA, THE FUTURE OF INDIA WAS PROBLEMATIC. THE FRENCH INTEND TO CONTINUE TO PLAY A HELPFUL ROLE, WITH A MODERATE AID PROGRAM, BUT WOULD NOT EXPECT GREATLY TO INFLUENCE EVENTS IN THE AREA.

2. PAKISTAN.

THE QUAI SOURCE WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISED THAT BHUTTO HAD BEEN ABLE TO WORK OUT A COMPROMISE WITH THE PNA BUT HE THOUGHT IT WAS AT THE PRICE OF VERY CONSIDERABLE COMPROMISES. HE THOUGHT THAT THE COMPROMISES WENT BEYOND

JUST THE RULES FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THE
ASSEMBLY AND THE NEW ELECTIONS. HE THOUGHT THAT, IN
EFFECT, BHUTTO HAD AGREED TO A FUNCTIONING
OPPOSITION PARTY, EVEN IN THE CASE OF HIS OWN VICTORY
AT THE POLLS, WHICH WOULD RESTRICT THE KIND OF
AUTHORITARIAN RULE WHICH HE HAD PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED.
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GIVEN THE PROBLEMS WITHIN PAKISTAN AND THE POLITICAL
PERSONALITY OF BHUTTO, IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS
WOULD BE A VIABLE COMPROMISE. BHUTTO HAD A GOOD CHANCE
TO WIN AT THE POLLS, BUT A PAGE IN PAKISTANI HISTORY
HAD BEEN TURNED, AND HE COULD NEVER EXPECT TO RULE AS
BEFORE. THE SOURCE THOUGHT THAT THE RECENT COMPROMISES
WHICH BHUTTO HAD MADE MIGHT PROVIDE A STRONG ARGUMENT
FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO PROCEED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE FRANCO-PAKISTAN CONTRACTS CONCERNING THE PROCESSING
PLANT (SEE SEPTEL).

3. AFGHANISTAN.

THE FRENCH HAD BEEN SURPRISED BY THE EFFECTIVENESS
WITH WHICH DAOUD HAD BEEN ABLE TO RULE AFGHANISTAN IN
THE PAST YEARS. THEY THOUGHT HE MIGHT BE THINKING OF
SOME SUCCESSOR WHO WOULD CONTINUE WITH HIS POLICIES
(THERE HAD BEEN TALK OF THE FORMER KING'S SON-INLAW),
BUT THE FRENCH QUESTIONED WHETHER HE WOULD BE ABLE TO
IMPOSE SUCH A SUCCESSOR. ALTHOUGH DAOUD'S HEALTH
SEEMED FAIRLY GOOD, ONE COULD STILL NOT BE COMPLACENT
ABOUT HIS BEING ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE CURRENT STABILITY.
THE FRENCH THOUGHT THAT THE REAL FORCE IN AFGHANISTAN
WAS ULTIMATELY THE ARMY, AND WHEN DAOUD VANISHED,
MILITARY POLITICS, WHICH OBVIOUSLY INCLUDED A STRONG
PRO-SOVIET ELEMENT, WOULD CHANGE THE CURRENT STABILITY
IN A MANNER WHICH COULD NOT NOW BE PREDICTED.
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